

USF College of Engineering Graduate Students on Capitol Hill

TAMPA, Fla. (August 10, 2010) Quenton Bonds and Andrea Rocha, two College of Engineering doctoral students, recently returned from a research poster session/networking session on Capitol Hill. The “NSF Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) on the Hill” event was targeted to congressional staff who may not know about the activities and achievements of the LSAMP program. Both Bonds and Rocha are participants of the Florida Georgia LSAMP Bridge to the Doctorate project at USF that has been funded by the National Science Foundation and USF (Provost’s Office, Office of Research & Innovation, Colleges of Engineering, Marine Science, Arts & Sciences, and Medicine).

According to Dr. Ralph Turner, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Florida A&M University and director of the Florida Georgia LSAMP program, “The LSAMP on the Hill event was intended to both showcase the accomplishments of the individual students as well as highlight the tremendous successes of LSAMP programs nationally in broadening participation within science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Throughout its 19-year history, LSAMP has had a significant impact on our nation’s STEM workforce.”

Bonds, a doctoral candidate in the Department of Electrical Engineering, will complete his NASA supported dissertation in early Fall 2010. He is developing a unique approach for noninvasive biomedical sensing using non-contact radiometric sensors that could be integrated into the uniforms of military servicemen and astronauts.

Bonds has accepted a position as a research scientist within the Microwave Instrument and Technology Branch at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center in Greenbelt, Maryland.



Andrea Rocha (second from right), Quenton Bonds (right) and members of U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor’s staff (left, second from left) in DC during the NSF’s LSAMP on Capitol Hill Day “(July 2010).

Rocha, a doctoral candidate in Engineering Science within the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, will complete her dissertation in Spring 2011. In addition to NSF, her research-training has been supported by the U.S. Department of Energy's Oak Ridge National Lab. Rocha's dissertation research is utilizing an integrated computational systems biology approach to identify metabolic components related to hydrogen-producing bacteria. Information obtained from her approach provides valuable insights into metabolic networks and system controls involved in expression of microbial traits essential for advancing engineering approaches that result in more efficient biohydrogen production. After graduation, she would like to become a research scientist at a federal laboratory.

In addition to the poster session, Bonds and Rocha met with LSAMP students from throughout the country, and interacted with congressional staffers from U.S. Representative Kathy Castor's office and others from their home districts in Alabama and Texas.

Since 2004, the FGLSAMP Bridge to the Doctorate project at USF has been recognized by NSF and other external funding agencies as a national model in its national recruitment, research training, and retention strategies for students from underrepresented groups. Currently, the project has 50 students in the PhD pipeline within five USF Colleges.

The University of South Florida is one of the nation's top 63 public research universities and one of only 25 public research universities nationwide with very high research activity that is designated as community engaged by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. USF was awarded \$380.4 million in research contracts and grants in FY 2008/2009. The university offers 232 degree programs at the undergraduate, graduate, specialist and doctoral levels, including the doctor of medicine. The USF System has a \$1.8 billion annual budget, an annual economic impact of \$3.2 billion, and serves more than 47,000 students on institutions/campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota-Manatee and Lakeland. USF is a member of the Big East Athletic Conference.

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